

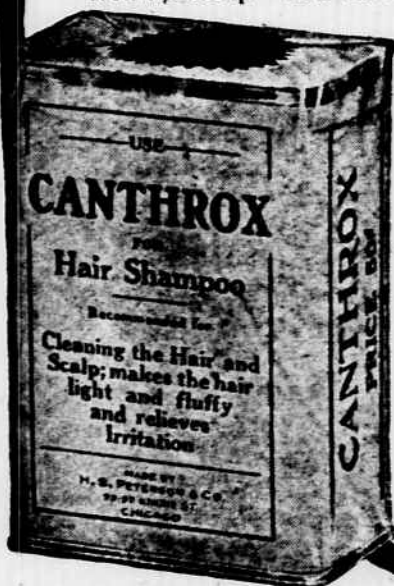


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CHASE OF THE DOG

By Marvin Dana

OCCASIONALLY some stray mongrel, regarded as mad, is chased for a few blocks, and then falls before the revolver of an intrepid policeman. That is the extent of our dog hunting. But about a hundred years ago, in England, one dog managed to defy the hunters for five months, and that despite the fact that the whole county of Cumberland was hot on its trail. He was indeed a public enemy, an outcast, with every man's hand against him. Whence he came none ever knew; but when he came he made his presence instantly perceived by the farmers, for he ravaged the flocks with appalling ferocity. He was a large beast, with tawny coat, striped like a tiger's; it is probable that he was a cross of mastiff and greyhound, with a few other strains to make a good measure of depravity.

It was in May, 1810, that this dog suddenly appeared in Lower Ennerdale, and forthwith his depredations began. Often he killed seven or eight sheep in a single night. But he displayed diabolical cunning in his outrages; for he never attacked the same flock twice in succession. On the contrary, his successive fields of slaughter were separated by wide distances. It was only after a sufficient interval of time had elapsed to relax vigilance that he visited a herd the second time. Moreover, he performed his exploits with singular discretion; never a bark or a growl gave warning of his presence. And always he chose the plumpest of the flock for his victims, killed them by one bite into the jugular, and then drank the hot blood.

The dalesmen had many furious chases after the creature. The farmers and their workers formed bands which kept watch over the flocks by night, equipped with hounds and guns. A shot or a shout was the signal that the dog had been sighted, when all rallied to the pursuit. Yet he was rarely discovered; for he was wondrously stealthy in all his ways. A number of times he was seen in the daytime. On such occasions everyone joined in the chase. Plowmen in the fields freed their horses, farmers driving along the roads took theirs from the carts, and all rode off bareback to hunt the spoiler of the herds. The dog would let the hounds follow him for ten or fifteen miles, and then, somehow, throw them off the scent. Often he waited for the leading hound to overtake him, and then crushed the forelegs of his pursuer by one bite of his powerful jaws. His speed was far beyond that of the hounds, as was his strength. No hound could ever be made to venture a second attack on him.

For weeks this condition of affairs continued. At last it became necessary to hire men to take the place of the watchers, who were worn out by their vigils and pursuits of the enemy. The crops suffered from neglect. The women too were wearied; for much unaccustomed labor fell on them by reason of the men's activities against the foe. The dog always prudently fled at the approach of a human being; but, despite that fact, the children had become so afraid of him that none dared go to school.

Therefore, in July, two months after the first coming of the dog, money was subscribed for a special pack of foxhounds to be used in hunting the slayer. There followed some most exciting runs, better by far than any ever had in pursuit of a fox. Once the dog led a company of two hundred men from Kinniside to the coast at Seascale, where he contrived to disappear. Two or three times in each week the dog was thus hunted out of Ennerdale; but he always promptly returned to his favorite mutton.

One notable run occurred on a Sunday. As the hunt swept by Ennerdale Church, the congregation hurried forth to join the chase, and with them came the vicar, leaving his sermon unpreached. But again the quest was fruitless, though the dog was followed all the way to Cockermouth. The next run was to Derwent, a distance of twenty miles. Another to St. Bees, almost an equal distance, resulted in the dog's being surrounded; but he managed to get clear away, running under one of the horses.

Not long afterward a glimpse was caught of him in a cornfield, and the field was speedily surrounded by armed men. The hounds drove out the marauder; but he got away through the fusillade with only a wounded paw. One of the foremost pursuers afterward caught sight of him bathing his wounded leg in Eden River, while the hounds about him kept at a respectful distance. He escaped for the time being; but, later the same day he blundered into the path of an armed man, who shot him dead at close range.

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